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NIXON-COHEN
AUGUSTA, MAINE

--- Sen. William Cohen, R-Maine, said Wednesday he's more convinced than ever he made the right decision when he voted to impeach President Richard Nixon a decade ago for his role in the Watergate scandal.

'I'm more satisfied than ever that the nature and extent of the abuses taking place at that time justified the conclusion reached by the Judiciary Committee,' Cohen said in a telephone interview from his Washington office.

Cohen was a freshman congressman in 1974 when, as a member of the House Judiciary Committee, he joined the majority in voting 27-11 to recommend taking the first step toward impeaching Nixon.

Nixon resigned Aug. 9, 1974.

Cohen said it was the cumulative effect of the evidence of abuse of office that led him to make his decision, although certain factors weighed more heavily than others.

'One of the most troubling things to me was the use of neutral instruments of government for private or political purposes, namely the use of the IRS to start auditing political enemies and ... the misuse of the CIA to interfere with FBI investigations,' Cohen said.

Cohen said the Judiciary Committee received bomb threats in the days before the vote on impeachment.

'A number of us had received threats at that time. There were bomb threats to the committee and personal threats to us. I had several of them and the mail had to be screened to make sure there were no letter bombs,' Cohen said.

The enduring lesson of Watergate was that no man is above the Constitution, Cohen said.

'No person should be allowed to maintain that he or she is identical with the office, and that his or her failings become our undoing,' he said.

Cohen said Watergate forced the country to grow and, in the long run, America benefited.